

EMS Aircraft Classification and Authorization

I. PURPOSE

This policy specifies the classification/authorization requirements for EMS aircraft providers who provide services within Contra Costa County.

II. CLASSIFICATION

The Contra Costa County EMS Agency (LEMSA) is responsible for classifying EMS aircraft based within its jurisdiction, except that the California EMS Authority (EMSA) is responsible for classifying aircraft of the California Highway Patrol (CHP H-30/32 Napa), CAL FIRE, and California National Guard.

A. Classification Categories

An EMS aircraft will be classified as either an air ambulance or a rescue aircraft. Rescue aircraft will be further classified as advanced life support (ALS), basic life support (BLS) or auxiliary based on level of medical flight crew credentials.

1. **Air Ambulance:** Any aircraft that is:

- a. constructed, modified, equipped, and used to respond to emergency requests and to transport critically ill or injured patients, and
- b. staffed with a minimum of two (2) attendants credentialed in advanced life support.

2. **Rescue Aircraft:** An aircraft whose usual function is not prehospital emergency patient transport but which may be used, in compliance with EMS policy, for prehospital emergency patient transport when use of an air or ground ambulance is unsuitable or unavailable.

- a. **Advanced Life Support (ALS) Rescue Aircraft:** A rescue aircraft whose medical flight crew has a minimum of one (1) attendant credentialed in advanced life support.
- b. **Basic Life Support (BLS) Rescue Aircraft:** A rescue aircraft whose medical flight crew has at a minimum one (1) attendant certified as an EMT or AEMT.
- c. **Auxiliary Rescue Aircraft:** A rescue aircraft which does not have a medical flight crew, or whose medical flight crew does not meet minimum requirements established for BLS Rescue Aircraft.

B. Medical Helicopter

The term “medical helicopter” shall mean a rotary wing aircraft that has been classified as an “air ambulance.”

III. CLASSIFICATION PROCEDURE

A. To become classified in Contra Costa County, an EMS aircraft provider is required to:

1. Submit a completed Contra Costa County EMS Aircraft Classification form
2. Submit all required attachments
3. Pay the current EMS Aircraft Classification fee.

B. Prior to classification, LEMSA staff may visually inspect the aircraft, equipment and radios.

C. An EMS aircraft provider shall apply for re-classification whenever there is a:

1. Transfer of ownership, or



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2. Change in any factor that applies to or affects its classification category.

D. No person or organization shall provide or hold itself out as providing prehospital air ambulance or air rescue services unless that person or organization has been classified by a local LEMSA, or in the case of the CHP, CAL FIRE, and California National Guard, by the EMSA.

IV. AUTHORIZATION

The LEMSA is responsible for authorizing EMS aircraft used for EMS response within its jurisdiction. Typically, only EMS aircraft that meet the “air ambulance” classification standard shall be authorized by the LEMSA to respond in Contra Costa County. However, any request by a public safety agency dispatch center shall constitute “authorization” to respond to that request only.

V. AUTHORIZATION PROCEDURE

To become authorized in Contra Costa County, an EMS aircraft provider is required to:

- A. Submit a completed EMS Aircraft authorization form
- B. Enter into a written agreement with the County, and
- C. Pay the current EMS Aircraft Authorization fee.

VI. PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

A. Services

1. Only an “air ambulance” may be dispatched in response to an emergency medical aircraft request.
2. Aircraft may respond to emergency requests when requested by a local public safety dispatch center.
3. A seamless “one (1) contact number system,” approved by the LEMSA, is to be used by local public safety dispatch centers when requesting EMS aircraft assistance.
4. An authorized provider shall assure that its dispatch center provides an accurate “estimated time of arrival” (ETA) in minutes and clock hours to the requester of each air ambulance request.
5. An authorized provider shall comply with all applicable Federal, State and local laws and regulations, and County EMS policies, procedures and protocols.

B. Dispatch and Communications

1. EMS aircraft dispatch centers shall be staffed and equipped to receive and process requests for EMS aircraft.
2. Dispatchers shall be adequately trained and prepared to process emergency medical requests.
3. Aircraft shall be capable of communicating with Sheriff’s Dispatch, on-scene ambulances, public safety agencies, and local Base and receiving hospitals.

C. Staffing

1. Air ambulance staffing shall include a medical flight crew consisting of a minimum of two (2) attendants licensed in advanced life support, at least one (1) of which is a registered nurse or physician.



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2. Air medical flight crewmembers and pilots shall maintain all required professional licensure.

D. Training and Orientation

1. Medical flight crewmembers shall be trained in aeromedical transportation as specified in Section 100302, California Code of Regulations, and maintain current professional licenses.
2. Medical flight crews and pilots shall be oriented and familiar with the local EMS system prior to responding to local emergency medical requests. Orientation shall include the following topics:
 - a. Terrain and weather considerations specific to the geographic area of the County.
 - b. Local EMS and public safety agencies.
 - c. Locations of and special operational information related to local hospitals and medical specialty centers, helipads, airports and pre-determined emergency landing sites.
 - d. Comprehensive communications inventory including frequency numbers, agency names and identifiers, PL codes, and any special communications procedures.
 - e. (Medical crew) Local medical control policies and procedures.

E. Medical Control

1. Local Medical Control Agreements shall be in place for paramedic crewmembers.
2. Providers shall assure compliance with local policies and procedures for medical control.
3. Registered Nurse (RN) crewmembers function within the Nurse Practice Act and shall be trained qualified to provide ALS care within the local paramedic scope of practice at a minimum.

F. Documentation and Reporting

1. Electronic Health Records (EHR) shall be completed for all patient transports regardless of location of receiving hospital. EHRs shall include required patient care data elements, requesting party/agency and times necessary to determine aircraft response time from initial notification, on-scene time, and transport time. Copies of EHRs shall be left with the patient at the receiving hospital. Response data for each call that originated within Contra Costa County shall be submitted to the LEMSA by the tenth (10th) of the following month in a format specified by the LEMSA. Submitted data shall include, but not be limited to, all data points specified in the "Contra Costa County Helicopter Minimum Dataset". Individual EHRs will be submitted to the LEMSA when requested.

G. Quality Improvement (QI)

1. Medical treatment guidelines for medical flight crew shall be in place and shall have been approved by the County EMS Medical Director.
2. A comprehensive continuous quality improvement (QI) program approved by the EMS Medical Director shall be in place and shall be overseen by a physician or a registered nurse.
3. QI information shall be supplied to the County upon request.
4. County shall be notified of any events that could impact the credentials of air medical crewmembers.
5. Provider shall participate in QI activities.



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H. Equipment and Supplies

1. EMS aircraft shall meet configuration and restraint standards for “air ambulance” according to Section 100306, California Code of Regulations.
2. Aircraft shall be stocked with full drug and solution inventories, and with BLS/ALS and related specialty medical equipment and supplies at all times.

VII. MAINTENANCE OF AUTHORIZATION

- A. County may inspect aircraft, facilities, equipment, policies and records relating to aircraft maintenance, dispatch, patient care, and personnel qualifications as pertain to local operations.
- B. Provider shall adhere to all applicable FARs including FAR Part 91 and 135 (or their equivalent).
- C. County may deny, suspend, or revoke an air ambulance authorization for failure to comply with applicable policies, procedures and regulations.

